

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers August 2, 2004

NETS FEATURE

More than 3,100 arrested during statewide drunk driving crackdown in Michigan

Law enforcement officers across the state arrested 3,105 motorists for alcohol-related offenses during the *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* drunk driving crackdown, which took place June 25-July 11. Of those arrests, 1,627 were for drunk driving and 1,478 were for other alcohol violations. ...More:

http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593_3504-97841--,00.html

What Does Problem Drinking Cost Your Business?

Employees with alcohol problems are found throughout the workforce in all industries from transportation services, to manufacturing to information technology, from the boardroom to the shop floor. Although only a small percentage of U.S. workers have a problem with alcohol; about 5 percent are alcohol dependent, or suffer from alcoholism; others drink in ways that pose a risk to their safety or to others in the worksite or on the roadway

...More: http://www.netsnational.org/newsletter/8_1_04a.asp

Michigan Laws pertaining to passenger vehicles used for towing

Here's how the law reads for utility trailers hauling goods—or those hauling boats or other vehicles—you can't go faster than 55 m.p.h. if the trailer and its load weigh more than 750 pounds or the trailer has more than two wheels. If you're hauling a camping trailer more than 26 feet long, you can't go faster than 55 m.p.h. Those under 26 feet must have brakes on each wheel and a stabilizing coupling at the hitch in order to exceed 55 m.p.h. The law states pickups with a gross weight of 10,000 pounds or more can't exceed 55 m.p.h. SUVs are considered passenger vehicles and must follow rules for that category of vehicle.

Latest Traffic Safety News

New Report on Cell Phones, Crashes

The AEI-Brookings Joint Center for Regulatory Studies issued a new report entitled "The Impact of Driver Cell Phone Use on Accidents." The methodology used in the study differed from previous research in that a larger sample of individual-level data was used and tested for selection effects, such as whether drivers who use cell phones are inherently less safe drivers, even when not on the phone. The study has three key findings: individuals who are more likely to use hands-free devices are more careful drivers even without them, the impact of cell phone use on crashes varies across the population, and a ban on cell phones would have little or no effect on the number of crashes. To view the report visit <http://aei-brookings.org/admin/authorpdfs/page.php?id=1007>

Laptop Computers in the Mobile Workforce

This new cutting-edge technology was designed specifically to remove driving distractions and keeps the drivers', who use mobile data technology, eyes on the road without interrupting the flow of information necessary to perform their tasks. For more information visit: www.blackoutpro.com

US Appeals Court Throws Out HOS Rules

The US Court of Appeals in Washington, DC has thrown out the federal government's new hours-of-service rules that extended the amount of time truckers can drive between breaks, sending the case back to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) for review. The court sided with lobby group Public Citizen that the new regulations failed to consider the impact on the health of drivers. The court also expressed concern over other aspects of the regulation, but didn't issue a ruling because the health issue was enough to throw it out entirely. FMCSA has 45 days to review the decision and decide whether to seek other legal remedies. During that period of time, the current hours-of-service regulations remain in effect. For more information visit <http://www.todaystrucking.com/displayarticle.cfm?ID=3274> and http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/Home_Files/revised_hos.asp To view the court's decision visit <http://pacer.cadc.uscourts.gov/docs/common/opinions/200407/03-1165a.pdf>

Congress Approves Highway Funding Extension

Before adjourning for its summer district work period, Congress extended existing federal highway programs through September 24, 2004, and federal transit, highway safety, and motor carrier safety programs through September 30, 2004. The national highway and transit funding bill – the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) – expired on September 30, 2003, and has been extended on four previous occasions as Congress debates long-term reauthorization proposals.

Are Self-Driving Vehicles Just Around the Corner?

Auto industry experts are predicting that self-driving vehicles are closer to becoming a reality. Today's automakers are beginning to equip their vehicles with technologies that some say are the first steps toward self-driving cars. More and more vehicles are hitting the markets with the technology to issue lane departure warnings, detect blind spots, provide parking assistance, and adjust cruise control speeds in response to the vehicle ahead. Building off of this technology, cars that can sense their environment, control themselves, and even communicate with each other are expected to reduce traffic congestion and crashes. For more information visit <http://www.detnews.com/2004/autosinsider/0407/18/c01-215233.htm>

First 'Black Box' Bill Takes Effect in CA

The nation's first "Black Box" law went into effect in California on July 15th. Black boxes record various data including speed and braking conditions. In the event of the crash, proponents say that this information can be collected for the purpose of helping automakers develop safer vehicles. However, privacy advocates raised concerns that downloading this information could infringe on one's constitutional rights, and furthermore that the data could be used to determine "fault" in a crash. The California law states that the information stored in a black box device can only be retrieved with the registered owner's consent or with a court order. The law also requires auto manufacturers to state in the owner's manual when a vehicle is equipped with a black box device.

20-Something Kids Apt To Stay On Parents' Auto Insurance Policies

According to recent research by Chubb Group of Insurance Companies, the number of 20-somethings staying on their parents' auto insurance policies after college is on the rise. Chubb reports that about one-third of all drivers in their 20s are on their parents' policies, an increase of 11 percent over the past two years. Auto insurers generally allow kids to remain on their parents' policies as long as they are living at home. These multi-car discounts allow parents to save money. However, a child's claim may not be covered if the insurer finds out that the child claiming to live with his or her parents, in fact does not.

I-95 Message Signs To Run 24 Hours A Day

Beginning next month, motorists traveling on I-95 in the Palm Beach area will see warnings on the highway's electronic message signs about crash delays and lane closures 24 hours a day. Prior to this decision, motorists traveling at night and on weekends didn't receive these warnings. The 24/7 service is designed to help drivers in the area cope with construction on the Interstate. Read the full article at http://www.palmbeachpost.com/localnews/content/auto/epaper/editions/sunday/local_news_049f8e76417d7114004b.html

Intelligent Traffic Lights Relieve Congestion

New technology, known as "intelligent traffic lights," is helping to reduce traffic congestion. These signals are able to detect approaching vehicles and stay green a little bit longer to accommodate the oncoming vehicle. According to the US Department of Transportation (USDOT), all 50 states now have intelligent transportation systems or are in the process of developing them. Studies for one system were found to reduce peak period travel time by 25 percent. For information visit <http://www.fleet-central.com/af/newspick.cfm?rank=4865>

Hawaii Finds Driver Courtesy Can Be a Bad Thing

Motorists in Hawaii are nationally ranked among the least aggressive drivers in the country. This normally admirable quality could be contributing to the growing congestion on its roadways. A national study found that Hawaii ranks 47th in the nation when it comes to making insurance claims for personal injury. However, driver professionals say that slightly more aggressive driving behaviors are needed to keep traffic flowing. Read the full article at <http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2004/Jul/26/lh/ln03a.html>

Murder Trial Examines Role of Dashboard Electronics

An Alaskan motorist is accused of second-degree murder for watching a movie on his dashboard DVD player instead of focusing on the road when he crashed head on into another vehicle. Highway officials found the dashboard DVD player, speakers, and a Sony PlayStation 2 in his truck. When installed as recommended, DVD players and TV screens are either visible only from the back seats or will not work unless the vehicle is in park. There is no law in Alaska that prohibits operating a DVD player in view of a driver. Read the full article at <http://www.cnn.com/2004/LAW/07/27/dvd.traffic.death.ap/index.html>

Adaptive Cruise Control Could Reduce Congestion, Crashes

According to American and German research, adaptive cruise control (ACC) has the potential to reduce congestion and crashes. A modified version of traditional cruise control, ACC uses radar to monitor the road ahead of a vehicle and adjusts the vehicle's speed to maintain a safe distance from the one in front. Research indicates that ACC reduces reaction time by one second for human drivers to a practically instantaneous reaction time for vehicles powered by machines. Slower reaction times translate to a smoother ride, as drivers are less likely to slam on their brakes—which often contributes to crashes and congestion. Read the full article at <http://www.arvalphh.co.uk/about/news/releases/Index.cfm?id=201>

Consumer Groups Advocate For Blind-Spot Auto Safety

As the number of children killed in driveway crashes increased by a staggering 57 percent last year, consumer groups are calling on lawmakers to include provisions to track statistics on children's deaths and to examine potential life-saving technologies. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) only tracks fatalities that occur on roadways, and not vehicle-related deaths that occur in parking lots or private homes. However, according to research, large blind spots in popular trucks and SUVs have contributed to many child deaths in driveways. Meanwhile, a national Consumers Union poll revealed that 82 percent of US consumers would choose a vehicle with additional child-safety

features, including rear sensors. Read the full article at
<http://www.detnews.com/2004/autosinsider/0407/21/c01-218471.htm>

Navigation Systems Inform Drivers of Crashes, Suggest Detours

Powered by XM Satellite Radio, navigation systems in the 2005 Acura and Cadillac CTS will be able to locate traffic jams and will allow drivers to request a detour. While similar systems have been available for a while in Europe and Japan, this marks a first for vehicles sold in the United States. However, some critics say that providing drivers with timely traffic information can cause other problems, as many drivers will choose the same alternate route.

Drivers 'Spray On' Anti-Photo Finish

As automated red-light and speed-radar cameras are on the rise, many drivers are turning to high-gloss sprays and plastic license plate covers to prevent or distort the incriminating photos from being taken. Advertised to defeat photo enforcements, these products are designed to reflect the flash back at automated cameras causing a 'glare' that would overexpose the photo of the license plate. Law enforcement officials and transportation officials question their effectiveness and their legality. Read the full article at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A222-2004Jul20?language=printer>

TRB Releases Guide to Reduce Collisions Involving Heavy Trucks

The Transportation Research Board's National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Report 500 Volume 13: Guidance for Implementation of the AASHTO Strategic Highway Safety Plan -- A Guide for Reducing Collisions Involving Heavy Trucks provides strategies that can be employed to reduce the number of collisions involving heavy trucks. View the guide at http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_500v13.pdf

Road Rage Report Cards Give Bicyclists Sense of Safety in CA

Thanks to the efforts of two road rage victims, Marin County bicyclists can now report incidents where they have been intimidated or attacked by motorists by completing a "Road Rage Report Card." These 2-by-4-inch cards are intended to be carried by bicyclists in a small bag along with a pencil. The cards have space for a license plate number, a description of the driver, and the location and time of the incident. They also list contact phone numbers of all local law enforcement agencies. The Marin County Bicycle Association is now distributing the cards. Read the full article at <http://www.marinij.com/Stories/0,1413,234~24407~2283306,00.html>

Deer-Vehicle Crash Information Toolbox Now Available

In July 2001, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation created the Deer-Vehicle Crash Information Clearinghouse. The organization has since completed its two-year extensive review of deer-vehicle crash (DVC) countermeasure documentation. The information is now available at <http://deercrash.com/toolbox/index.htm>

News from USDOT

NHTSA Emphasizes Crash Avoidance Technology

To reverse the rise of traffic-related fatalities, federal auto safety regulators are shifting their focus from occupant protection strategies to new automotive technology that will help drivers avoid crashes altogether. In 2003, more than 43,000 people died in motor vehicle crashes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has already shifted its priorities to examine the benefits of crash-avoidance technologies including automatic braking, cruise control that changes the vehicle's speed in response to the car ahead, rollover warning systems, and sensors that detect drowsiness in drivers. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2004/autosinsider/0407/18/a01-215518.htm>

Can Federal Toll Lanes Reduce Congestion?

According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the number of motor vehicles on US roadways has increased nearly 20 percent between 1992 and 2002—10 times the rate in road expansion. With increased traffic and insufficient funds to build new roads to meet this demand, a new proposal calls on Congress to fund toll lanes. Proponents say that the money generated would supplement transportation costs now funded by the federal gas tax. For more information visit <http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0721/p08s03-comv.html?s=hns>

NHTSA: Limit Cell Phone Use To Emergencies

NHTSA is recommending that drivers do not use their cell phones at all while driving, except in an emergency situation. The recommendation comes as The Wall Street Journal recently reported that headsets and speakerphones don't improve safety because it's the mental distraction of talking on the phone and not holding it that causes the danger while driving. NHTSA drafted a letter to be sent to all US governors stating that laws prohibiting hand-held cell phones and promoting the use of headsets "will not address the problem" and "may erroneously imply that hands-free phones are safe to use while driving."

New FHWA Team To Address Work Zones

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has developed a team to address the impact work zones have on traffic congestion and safety. In 2002, work zones were the cause of 24 percent of nonrecurring congestion, 1,181 fatalities, and more than 40,000 injuries. The team will work towards three goals including the establishment of State and local partnerships to address the congestion issue, the reduction of work zone delays over the next five years, and the implementation of programs to manage traffic incidents. For information visit <http://www.tfhr.gov/pubrds/04may/07.htm>

NHTSA Expected To Issue Low Tire Air Pressure Ruling

NHTSA is expected to issue a proposal mandating low tire air-pressure signals this fall. The sensors will alert drivers of low tire pressure. According to NHTSA, low tire pressure may have an influence on any crash that involves braking, since low tire pressure can result in reduced stopping distance. The agency estimates that 23,000 crashes and 535 fatal crashes annually involve blowouts or flat tires.

NHTSA Seeks Public Comment on Strategies to Improve Data Collection

NHTSA is seeking public comment on "Initiatives to Address Improving Traffic Safety Data," a report examining upgrades to America's traffic safety data collection systems. The report is a result of an in-depth examination of data-collection issues by a team of US Department of Transportation officials, and in consultation with local, state, and national traffic safety experts. It proposes initiatives to help reduce roadway fatalities and injuries by increasing the communication of timely, accurate, uniform,

complete and accessible traffic safety data. To view the report visit

http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/Crash/crashstatistics/TrafficSafetyData_IPT_Report.htm To

comment of the report's proposals visit <http://dms.dot.gov>

New Guide Assists Physicians Address Older Drivers

NHTSA recently released "A Physician's Guide to Assessing and Counseling Older Drivers," a guide designed to assist physicians in evaluating the abilities of their older patients to operate a motor vehicle safely. To view the guide visit

http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/olddrive/physician_guide/PhysiciansGuide.pdf

International Traffic Safety News:

Driver Training Slashes UK Pharmaceutical Company Crash Rate

Roche UK, a pharmaceutical company with a 300-vehicle fleet has slashed its crash rate by a fifth in two years. The company achieved the reduction after introducing a driver-training program for all essential drivers, including those who don't use a company vehicle. All new drivers participate in the driver training, which offers one-on-one practical sessions.

Fleets Urged To Conduct Health, Safety Checks on Drivers

European vehicle management services provider PHH Arval, has issued an employer health and safety checklist following recent inquiries from fleet customers unaware of their health and safety responsibilities to drivers. Should an employee become involved in a crash while on-the-job and is found to be at fault, the employer could face civil and criminal prosecution. To avoid negligent entrustment and liability charges, the company is urging fleets to complete health and safety checks on drivers as well as vehicles. Read the press release at

<http://www.arvalphh.co.uk/about/news/releases/Index.cfm?id=201>

RAC Report: Employees Driving Abroad At Risk

A recent RAC report found that employees who drive abroad as part of their job could be at risk for a crash unless they are made aware of country-by-country traffic laws. It is estimated that up to 70 percent of people driving in abroad are unaware of traffic regulations in any of the European countries. The report was conducted in conjunction with fleet management company, Pro-Drive. Both organizations recommend drivers spend some time becoming familiar with a new vehicle and environment before entering the roadway system.

UK Considers National Toll On All Roads

A government study ordered by the UK's Transport Secretary has proposed a national toll on all roads that would charge drivers up to 90p a kilometer (£1.45 a mile) and potentially slash the country's congestion in half. The proposal would involve equipping Britain's 30 million cars with electronic chips linked to satellite and would charge motorists for every kilometer traveled. The study suggested that the plan could raise more than £10 billion a year for the Treasury. For more information visit

http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,6903,1258751,00.html

Moscow Roadways: Congested, Polluted, and Perilous

The Baltimore Sun recently reported that Moscow has quickly become one of the worst cities in terms of traffic. Since 1987, the number of cars has nearly quadrupled within Russia's capital city and is expected to continue to rise. Illustrating the impact of this increase, traffic deaths rose almost 30 percent in the past three years. The rise is attributed to a surge in automobile ownership, the antiquated road system, and inexperienced drivers. Alcohol impaired driving is also a problem with studies finding that alcohol plays a role in nearly three out of 10 crashes. To cope with the recent traffic

road-wise workforce

problem, a \$3 million Center of Tele-Automatic Traffic Management has been built. For more information visit <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/nationworld/baltimore.traffic20jul20,0,1524863.story?coll=bal-nationworld-headlines>



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